

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

February 2, 2022

1:31 p.m.

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Mia Costello, Chair
Senator Joshua Revak, Vice Chair
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Stevens

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 19(EDC)

"An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and establishing limited language immersion teacher certificates."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 159

"An Act relating to unemployment benefits."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 19

SHORT TITLE: LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) KREISS-TOMKINS

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	EDC, L&C
04/09/21	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/09/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/09/21	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/12/21	(H)	FIN REPLACES L&C REFERRAL
04/12/21	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
04/12/21	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

04/12/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/12/21	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/14/21	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/14/21	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
04/16/21	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/16/21	(H)	Moved CSHB 19(EDC) Out of Committee
04/16/21	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/19/21	(H)	EDC RPT CS(EDC) 5DP 2NR
04/19/21	(H)	DP: ZULKOSKY, CRONK, PRAX, STORY, DRUMMOND
04/19/21	(H)	NR: HOPKINS, GILLHAM
05/03/21	(H)	FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
05/03/21	(H)	Heard & Held
05/03/21	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
05/06/21	(H)	FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
05/06/21	(H)	Moved CSHB 19(EDC) Out of Committee
05/06/21	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
05/07/21	(H)	FIN RPT CS(EDC) 5DP 4NR
05/07/21	(H)	DP: EDGMON, LEBON, CARPENTER, THOMPSON, MERRICK
05/07/21	(H)	NR: RASMUSSEN, JOSEPHSON, WOOL, ORTIZ
05/14/21	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
05/14/21	(H)	VERSION: CSHB 19(EDC)
05/17/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/17/21	(S)	EDC, L&C, FIN
01/21/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
01/21/22	(S)	Heard & Held
01/21/22	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
01/26/22	(S)	EDC RPT 5DP
01/26/22	(S)	DP: HOLLAND, HUGHES, STEVENS, MICCICHE, BEGICH
01/26/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
01/26/22	(S)	Moved CSHB 19(EDC) Out of Committee
01/26/22	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
01/31/22	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
01/31/22	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
02/02/22	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 19

DR. DEENA BISHOP, Superintendent

Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in strong support of HB 19.

DEWEY Kk'oleyo HOFFMAN, Deputy Director
Tribal Services and Client Services
Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 19.

BRANDON LOCKE, Director
World Language and Immersion Programs
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 19.

ANNE FULLER
Alaska Native Sisterhood Glacier Valley Camp 70
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 19.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator
Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 19.

REID MAGDANZ, representing self
Kotzebue, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 19.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:31:11 PM](#)

CHAIR MIA COSTELLO called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Revak, Gray-Jackson, and Chair Costello. Senator Micciche arrived during the course of the meeting.

HB 19-LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

[1:32:03 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 19(EDC) "An Act relating to instruction in a language other

than English; and establishing limited language immersion teacher certificates."

[1:32:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, Sponsor of HB 19, began by describing the earlier iterations of the bill. He continued the introduction speaking to the Sponsor Statement. It read as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Language immersion education is an increasingly popular educational model that also produces impressive academic outcomes. In an immersion program, some of the academic subject matter is delivered in a language other than English.

HB 19 provides needed flexibility to school districts operating language immersion programs. HB 19 gives the State Board of Education and Early Development the tools necessary to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing Alaska's immersion programs: finding fully certified teachers also fluent in an Alaska Native or foreign language. Under HB 19, the state board could provide school districts case-by-case flexibility to hire language immersion teachers they know are qualified to lead a classroom but who – for reasons such as limited English proficiency, advanced age, or familial responsibilities – are unable at the time to get a full teacher certification. To do so, the state board would have to create a new certificate along the lines of the existing "Type M" or "Type I" limited certificates.

Alaska already has a variety of successful and popular immersion programs, including Wasilla's Fronteras Spanish Immersion Program, Anchorage's Rilke Schule German School of Arts and Sciences, and Anchorage School District's highly regarded World Languages and Immersion Program.

Immersion is also central to Alaska Native language revitalization efforts. In Israel, New Zealand, and Hawaii, immersion education was at the core of indigenous language revival. At Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in Bethel, instruction is done in Yup'ik, and interest in

Alaska Native language immersion education is growing elsewhere in the state.

HB 19 will help Alaska's language immersion programs continue to provide high-quality dual-language education.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS explained that HB 19 allows school boards to apply for a limited teacher certificate for one year for a fluent speaker of a target language. If the school board and district agree to seek a limited teacher certificate on behalf of a fluent speaker, DEED and the State Board of Education would review the request according to the regulations DEED promulgated and approve or deny the request. If approved, the teacher would receive a one-year certificate to teach in the immersion language program.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS stated that the goal with this type of certificate is to create a flexible mechanism and stepping stone for individuals who are fluent in a target language and are qualified to teach but do not hold a teaching certificate in the U.S. The bill has broad support from stakeholders.

[1:37:18 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO said she would like to hear from Dr. Deena Bishop who the committee invited to testify.

[1:37:49 PM](#)

DR. DEENA BISHOP, Superintendent, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, Testified in strong support of HB 19. She paraphrased the following prepared testimony:

[Original punctuation provided.]

I am writing as superintendent of the Anchorage School District (ASD) to express support for House Bill 19 pertaining to limited teacher certificates for language immersion programs.

ASD has a longstanding history with dual language immersion programs. Our first program was Japanese, beginning in 1989. Since then, we have added two Spanish programs and we are home to the nation's very first Russian immersion program. We also have a K-8 German immersion charter school with a continuation strand at Service High School.

The aforementioned programs all serve K-12 students. Five years ago, we launched a Mandarin Chinese immersion program (currently K-4), with plans to expand each year until it is also a K-12 program. In 2018, we launched a Yup'ik immersion program using a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education. This is the first indigenous language immersion program in an urban setting in our nation. Finally, we opened a French immersion program in 2019 with plans to expand annually.

I provide this background to illustrate my district's commitment to language programs, all of which have stemmed from community interest and grassroots efforts over the years. In addition to our immersion programs, ASD offers language classes at its middle and high schools. We offer Level I through Advanced Placement in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish, as well as Level I-IV in American Sign Language. Approximately 8,000 ASD students are enrolled in second language coursework, with roughly 2,500 students in our dual language immersion programs.

With multiple language programs in place, our ability to hire fully qualified teachers with the high level of language proficiency needed to teach in an immersion program is an ongoing challenge. Very rarely do we have a pool of candidates-teachers with native or near-native language proficiency who are eligible to be certificated under existing regulations from which to draw, and we find ourselves constantly recruiting to fill these "hard to fill" vacancies.

ASD has taken advantage of DEED's "program enrollment" option, which requires candidates to enroll in a teacher education program while they are teaching full-time. This has not been easy on our teachers who are doing so. We also recognize that DEED has recently developed a Type W limited certificate. However, it still requires a teacher preparation program.

I am not suggesting that we support applicants who have not completed a teacher education program; however, sometimes it is impossible to find

certificated candidates who have the language proficiency needed for the position **and** who have also completed a teacher preparation program. It is worth noting that these candidates are highly educated individuals, many of whom hold advanced degrees from their home countries, including engineers, doctors, lawyers, and accountants. We have also found that some of our candidates have teaching degrees and/or teaching experience in their home country, but since their teacher education programs do not necessarily align with a traditional teacher education program in the US, they struggle with obtaining a teacher certificate through DEED.

ASD is supportive of the flexibility that HB 19 offers with respect to sharing with the State Board of Education our experience and challenges with operating immersion programs. We support HB 19 and the creation of a one-year limited certificate for "instruction in a language other than English." ASD welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the certificate as the State Board develops the regulations. ASD foresees using limited certificates in rare circumstances.

HB 19 provides the flexibility needed to ensure that ASD has native or near-native speakers of our given immersion languages in the classroom. This option will be helpful as we continue to provide the highest quality language immersion education possible, ensuring that hired individuals have the content knowledge and subject area expertise required to teach in their assigned area.

Thank you for allowing me to comment in support of HB 19. Please let me know if you have questions.

[1:42:39 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE joined the committee.

[1:43:26 PM](#) condense

DEWEY Kk'okeyo HOFFMAN, Deputy Director, Tribal Services and Client Services, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of HB 19. He stated that TCC is an Alaska Native tribal health and social services consortium established by the Interior Alaska tribes and tribal communities. Its purpose is to provide a unified voice in advancing sovereign tribal governments to promote physical and

mental wellness, education, socio-economic development and the culture of the Interior Alaska Native people. He noted that he also was offering testimony on behalf of the Alaska Regional Coalition (ARC), which is a coalition of four Alaska regional Native nonprofits and one regional tribe. ARC includes Central Council Tlingit and Haida, Maniilaq, Chugachmiut, Kawerak, and Tanana Chiefs Conference. Together this is about 100 communities and 55,000 people. He related that he also represents his family as an enrolled member of the Native Village of Ruby, Alaska.

MR. HOFFMAN reported that he has been an advocate of this legislation for many years. In particular, he sees the need for skilled language teachers in Alaska Native communities. The bill requires unique consideration of the circumstances and history that led to the current teacher shortage. Oftentimes, community-based language learners and grass-roots organizers are in the position to have to simultaneously learn and teach their heritage language. Sometimes they even teach neighboring languages. He shared that in addition to his own, he is involved with Inupiat, Gwitchin and several other indigenous languages.

MR. HOFFMAN stated that Native students and families want to take advantage of opportunities and find ways to partner with school districts to include culturally responsive and language-specific curriculum. He highlighted that this can be a Catch-22 situation when certification programs for Native languages are not readily available. In fact, he was not aware of such an endorsement for his Native language. He also noted that while community members with strong ties to their heritage language are encouraged to participate, there are some languages that are in a state of reclamation that include non-indigenous and non-Alaskan educators.

[1:47:14 PM](#)

MR. HOFFMAN shared that his daughter attends the Gwitchin language school, Tanan Ch'at'oh, which is a small grass-roots learning community where children under age 5 are exposed daily to Gwitchin language. This is not his own language but he promotes and wants to see such opportunities grow in Fairbanks and elsewhere. He emphasized that young people in Alaska deserve to connect to the invaluable repository of knowledge that is embedded in heritage languages. Efforts to revitalize these languages must be understood according to locally defined needs, goals, and resources, both human and material. He urged all stakeholders to work together to strengthen Alaska's indigenous languages.

1:48:40 PM

BRANDON LOCKE, Director, World Language and Immersion Programs, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, stated agreement with Dr. Bishop's testimony. He said it is a challenging time with teacher shortages and the lack of a solid pool of candidates from which to draw. ASD has about 2,500 students in the language immersion programs and just nine teachers who are sponsored through the federal government on H-1B [specialty occupation] visas. He agreed with Dr. Bishop that ASD would use the limited teacher's certificate as a last resort for impossible to fill positions. He noted that when the district sponsors someone, the individual must have a visa in hand and they cannot do that from outside the U.S. if they have not completed an Alaska teacher certification program and/or if they need to take a Praxis test. Not having access to those is detrimental in obtaining an Alaska teaching certificate.

MR. LOCKE said he sees the greatest need for the limited teacher's certificate at the elementary level. The immersion teacher is paired with an experienced educator and they share the same group of students. An English teacher teaches English language arts and math for half of the instructional day and the other half is taught by the immersion teacher who is integrating French language arts, for example, with science and social studies.

He assured the committee that ASD middle and high school language immersion teachers are not teaching classes such as physics or biology in the target language. Rather, they primarily teach the target language at an advanced level to meet the needs of the immersion students. He said the results have been phenomenal.

1:53:01 PM

CHAIR COSTELLO noted that the language on page 1, lines 9-10 clarifies that "the instruction is provided only to students who are enrolled in a language immersion program." She posed the example of students from Sand Lake Elementary School moving to the Japanese Program at Dimond High School. She asked if his understanding was that once those students leave (SLES) they would not be considered to be in a language immersion program so this bill would not apply to those teachers.

MR. LOCKE clarified that the current K-12 programs have strands at the middle and high school. The growing programs such as Chinese, Yupik, and French are not at that point because grades are still being added at the elementary level. Students who go

through the Japanese Program at Sand Lake will matriculate to a continuation program at Mears Middle School, and then on to Dimond High School. The students will still be instructed in Japanese by Japanese immersion teachers, but at the middle and high school levels there is more flexibility because the immersion teachers also teach the target language classes to non-immersion students as an elective. He noted that Mears is the only middle school in Anchorage that has the ability to do this because it has the teachers on staff for the Japanese Immersion Program.

1:55:07 PM

CHAIR COSTELLO asked if an individual who receives a limited certificate would be able to teach those students because her reading is that they would not be able to do so.

MR. LOCKE suggested the sponsor respond to the question. He related that in Anchorage, the language immersion teachers at the middle and high school level do provide language instruction to non-immersion students provided it fits into their teaching schedule and there is a need.

CHAIR COSTELLO said she would follow up on the question following the invited testimony.

1:56:44 PM

ANNE FULLER, Alaska Native Sisterhood Glacier Valley Camp 70, Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of HB 19. She stated that the organization is focused on improving public education and increasing civic engagement. HB 19 supports culturally relevant education and illumination of the world view through language. She described HB 19 as carefully written and appropriate. She requested support for speakers of indigenous languages and pointed out that all children benefit from place-based culturally responsive, intellectually challenging education. She concluded that HB 19 will help school districts and DEED provide this type of education.

1:58:42 PM

CHAIR COSTELLO read the language on page 1, lines 9-10 and asked the sponsor whether those middle school and high school students are still enrolled in a language immersion program if they only take higher level [language] classes. She observed that if the answer is "yes" then the bill would not allow for a limited teacher certificate in high school.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS offered his understanding that somebody who is teaching Dostoevsky to fluent Russian speakers in an ASD language immersion program would be eligible for a limited certificate as provided under HB 19. The limited certificate is not intended to apply for districts seeking to hire a Spanish I or French II teacher. He recalled from hearings in previous committees that the origin of the language she referenced was to differentiate between traditional K-12 programs and immersion language programs.

CHAIR COSTELLO stated that the students in the Russian Immersion Program at Turnagain Elementary School eventually matriculate to West High School. She asked Dr. Bishop if those students were still considered to be in the Russian Immersion Program.

2:02:00 PM

DR. BISHOP explained that students in the immersion program in elementary school move on to middle school and continue to receive high level language instruction. They are also taught math by middle school teachers who are not considered immersion teachers. The students continue to take a high level Russian class in high school. She said the quality experience these students have results in true bi-literacy. For example, the National Security Agency of Alaska recruits students from the program in their junior year for internships in the highly secure NSA facility on Elmendorf Air Force Base. Year before last, two 17-year-old female students prepared a report that found its way to the President's desk. They were in the Russian Immersion Program but also were taking courses from highly qualified non-immersion teachers. She said she has followed HB 19 for six years and the language Senator Costello referenced is in the bill because somebody was worried that teachers with limited certificates would teach all subject matter. In fact, HB 19 fills a need and gap for what students are expected to learn. The many safeguards in the bill make it sensible and high quality: certification is one piece, high quality instruction is another piece, school boards have to give approval, and the certificates are year-to-year.

CHAIR COSTELLO noted that the Board of Education has to approve an individual who is seeking certification. She asked how often the board meets.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS deferred the question to Sondra Meredith.

2:05:03 PM

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator, Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, Juneau, Alaska, answered that the board holds four regular meetings a year and also meets periodically. She explained that the board would establish regulations directing the department and commissioner to address certification on a case-by-case basis.

[2:05:53 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO related that she introduced a similar bill in a previous legislature after she learned about a young Russian woman who was not allowed in the classroom to share her love for her language and culture. Not being able to use this young woman in the classroom seemed to be a lost opportunity.

She said her initial concern with the language she referenced was that applicants would need to wait for the board to meet to approve their application. However, it sounds as though the board will promulgate the regulations and the department will review and approve the applications.

MS. MEREDITH agreed that was correct.

SENATOR MICCICHE agreed that not being able to use the young Russian woman and others who have similar talents to share is a lost opportunity, particularly in light of the teacher shortages in the state.

CHAIR COSTELLO said her initial concern was that the bill would not allow high schools to take advantage of the limited language certificate. However, Mr. Locke said that high schools would not have the need to use this certificate because they already have certified teachers in the advanced language classes. The bill would primarily be used to benefit language immersion programs in elementary schools.

SENATOR REVAK said he appreciates the legislation but given the testimony and discussion, he questions the necessity of the language on page 1, lines 9-10.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked the committee to consider that he has tried to strike a balance between stakeholder and legislator perspectives to achieve maximum consensus to get the limited certificate established. He suggested that the existing language might achieve that outcome.

SENATOR REVAK said he appreciates the response and he hopes the intent of the legislation is achieved, should it pass.

2:11:41 PM

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON described HB 19 as the right thing to do.

2:12:19 PM

CHAIR COSTELLO directed attention to the language on page 2, line 23. She asked how a person with a limited certificate will 1) "demonstrate skills in the classroom;" 2) how the board or department will assess whether or not the person is effective in student assessment; and 3) how the process will determine that the person is fluent.

2:12:59 PM

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS replied that the determinations ultimately will be at the discretion of the educational professionals. Citing the Frontier Charter School as an example, he explained that if the district is applying on a person's behalf for a limited certificate there might be a resume to point to; they could do practice lessons with the superintendent sitting in to assess the person's pedagogic ability and confidence; and a variety of qualitative reviews could be done. The idea of putting this in statute is to make it clear that people who have some language ability won't be pulled in off the street and given a limited certificate. He said he trusts that processes will be developed at the state and district level to accurately assess that a person has something to offer students in different language immersion programs. He emphasized that these programs have been very successful and have a lot of support. School boards only apply if they think the individual will further this successful program.

CHAIR COSTELLO noted the language that says the individual must be providing instruction to language immersion students, but it may be in any subject as long as the language is not English. She asked if there were concerns about somebody teaching math, for example, when they may not be qualified.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS replied that the nature of immersion language programs is that all subjects are taught in the target language. For example, elementary students in the Japanese Immersion Program in Anchorage spend a portion of the day learning certain subjects in the Japanese language and a portion of the day learning subjects that are taught in English. He deferred further response to Mr. Locke.

CHAIR COSTELLO asked Mr. Locke to comment on the idea that an individual with a limited language certificate may be teaching any subject.

2:17:08 PM

MR. LOCKE said he could only speak to the curriculum at ASD, but he had observed the programs at Frontier and Bethel that follow the same model, which is partial immersion. He explained that in that model each elementary grade is split into two groups. One group spends the morning with an English speaking teacher who instructs English language arts and math in English. The other group spends the morning with a Japanese speaking teacher, for example, who instructs Japanese language arts while integrating the science and social studies curriculum. Those two curricular areas are used in immersion because people talk about things related to science and social studies on a daily basis. Math is not instructed in the target language because math vocabulary is different than everyday vocabulary. [In the afternoon, the groups switch teachers.]

MR. LOCKE said he had a clarification about the high school program if there were no questions.

CHAIR COSTELLO pointed out that, despite testimony to the contrary, the bill would allow an individual with a limited language certificate to teach math in a language other than English.

She asked him to comment on the high school students.

MR. LOCKE explained that at the middle and high school levels the immersion programs are called a language immersion continuation strand. Students have a six or seven period school day and two classes are taught in the target language. For example, Japanese immersion students from Sand Lake Elementary, move to Mears Middle School where two of the seven periods in the day are blocked and the students are taught advanced Japanese language and social studies in Japanese. The other five periods of the day are taught in English by non-Japanese immersion teachers. Those students are considered to be in the Japanese immersion program. In high school the immersion students spend one period a day in advanced language. The classes for each grade are theme-based.

MR. LOCKE continued to explain that from time to time teachers are asked to fill in and teach a class outside their area of expertise. For example, when he was teaching high school French,

he was asked to fill in and teach Spanish I because he had taken two Spanish classes in college. Mr. Locke acknowledged that he is not qualified to teach Spanish and said that, if at all possible, it would be preferable in that circumstance for the school to utilize an advanced native speaker who is teaching in the immersion program. He added that the majority of their teaching would be the advanced immersion classes.

2:23:02 PM

SENATOR MICCICHE summarized the need and intent of the bill and expressed hope that it leads many of the people who receive a limited certificate to become educators. He mentioned the 1,200 teacher shortage in Alaska and noted that schools are relying on uncertified substitutes. He also noted that the language the committee discussed could provide flexibility going forward for immersion teachers to help with electives.

CHAIR COSTELLO said she believes HB 19 was referred to this particular committee because of the teacher shortage and the challenges school districts face in trying to fill positions. She asked Dr. Bishop to comment on these points.

2:25:34 PM

DR. BISHOP said Senator Micciche's comments were right on target; districts are relying on substitutes when there is a teacher shortage. She added that it's interesting to look at studies about certification from a university versus a badging program or an alternative type of certification. There isn't evidence that certification from a university is better than the others simply because of the variation in how colleges prepare teachers. They don't show up as any better or worse than an alternative pathway. However, she said nobody will get this limited certificate unless the job is unfilled and the local school board gives approval. Districts have to apply and it has been done through the type N certificate. She highlighted that the district now has some courses in high school that are taught by engineers who do not have a teaching certificate, but they bring great value and expertise to the table. She acknowledged that the district is accountable for the outcomes.

2:27:25 PM

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony on HB 19.

2:27:43 PM

REID MAGDANZ, representing self, Kotzebue, Alaska, stated that he was raised in Kotzebue and Nome; he worked on prior versions of the bill as a legislative staffer; and he was speaking from his experience working with many others to advance language

revitalization. He has been working for about ten years as a member of the Inupiat language learning collective. For the past three winters he has worked to support Inupiat language teachers in the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. He asked the committee to consider two points. First, language immersion is central to Native language revitalization. For a language to return to daily use, it must be passed from adults to children. Second, teachers are the crucial missing element to achieving language immersion education in Alaska. The lack of teachers is the primary barrier for any school district that wants to start a language immersion program. He cited examples in both Kotzebue and Nome. Further, 40 years of experience has shown that the current structure of the teacher certification system is not providing the teachers needed for the Native language immersion programs that communities statewide are looking for.

MR. MAGDANZ concluded his testimony by recounting the language revitalization version of the chicken and egg problem. Without language immersion programs you can't achieve language revitalization and without teachers you can't have immersion programs. Without immersion programs that teach young children their Native languages, he asked who is available to be teachers. HB 19 helps solve this problem he said by giving school districts across the state a means to use the language and teaching talent that already exists in their communities.

[2:30:32 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO discerned that there was no one else who wished to comment and closed public testimony on HB 19.

She stated she would hold HB 19 in committee for future consideration.

[2:31:02 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Costello adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:31 p.m.